

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 EB-07

COME-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01 AID-05 IGA-02 L-03 PRS-01

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FM AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5358

C O N F I D E N T I A L MONROVIA 4555

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: ECON, LI

SUBJECT: LIBERIA REFINING COMPANY (LRC)

REF: MONROVIA 4397

SUMMARY: AT THE END OF MY MEETING WITH HIM JUNE 29 PRESIDENT TOLBERT DISMISSED FROM HIS OFFICE ALL BUT MINISTER FOR PRESIDENTIAL AFFAIRS TOWNSEND, ACTING FONMIN SHERMAN AND DCM IN ORDER TO DISCUSS WITH ME PRIVATELY HIS GROWING CONCERN ABOUT THE TREATMENT LIBERIA IS RECEIVING AT THE HANDS OF PRIVATE U.S. ENTERPRISES.

1. THE PRINCIPAL TARGET OF HIS CONSIDERABLE IRE WAS SUN OIL, MAJORITY SHARE HOLDER OF LIBERIA REFINING COMPANY (LRC). HE WAS EXTREMELY UPSET THAT SUN HAD "PUT OUT" THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF LIBERIA HAD EXPROPRIATED ITS PROPERTY HERE. HE CHARACTERIZED THIS ACTION AS "VERY WICKED". TOLBERT SAID THAT IF HE EVER DECIDED TO EXPROPRIATE PROPERTY HE WOULD GO AHEAD AND DO SO BUT THIS IS "JUST NOT OUR POLICY" AND IT IS UNFAIR TO "GARB US WITH SOMETHING THAT IS NOT FOR US". HE SAID SUN'S ACTIONS ARE "DESTROYING OUR IMAGE ABROAD AND THIS IS NOT RIGHT COMING FROM OUR FRIENDS".

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2. WITH ONLY SLIGHTLY LESS FIRMNESS TOLBERT COMPLAINED ABOUT THE WAY LIBERIAN MINING CORPORATION (LMC) HAS HANDLED THE CLOSING DOWN OF ITS IRON ORE OPERATION AT BOMI HILLS. HIS MAIN COMPLAINT CENTERED AROUND THE DISPUTE BETWEEN THE LMC AND THE GOL ABOUT OWNERSHIP OF MOVABLE AND IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES. HE SAID THAT INSTEAD OF SETTLING THIS MATTER AMICABLY LMC WAS INSISTING ON

GOING TO ARBITRATION; "THEY DON'T EVEN WANT US TO GET THE MOVABLE PROPERTIES WHICH ARE BECOMING WORTHLESS FROM NEGLECT". AND, "OUR NEIGHORS THICK WE ARE FOOLS FOR LETTING OURSELVES BE TREATED THIS WAY".

3. SUMMING UP, HE SAID THAT EXPERIENCES SUCH AS THE ABOVE PUT HIM UNDER TREMENDOUS PRESSURE PARTICULARLY FROM THE YOUNG LIBERIANS AND ARE THE KIND THAT COMPEL COUNTRIES THAT SUPPORT FREE ENTERPRISE AND FOREIGN WESTERN INVESTMENT TO LOOK ELSEWHERE.

4. COMMENT: I HAVE RARELY SEEN PRESIDENT TOLBERT SO EXERCISED. WHILE HE REITERATED DURING THE COURSE OF THE CONVERSATION THE CLOSE AND HARMONIOUS TIES BETWEEN OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS, FURTHER DETERIORATION IN GOL/LMC/LRC RELATIONS WILL DOUBTLESS CREATE STRAINS ON THOSE TIES. CARTER

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Approved on Date:
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